

**Independent Remuneration Panel
for Worcestershire District Councils**

Annual Report and Recommendations for 2023-24

Bromsgrove District Council

December 2022

| Contents | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Recommendations to Council | 1 |
| Introduction and Context | 2 |
| Background Evidence and Research Undertaken | 2 |
| Basic Allowance 2023-24 | 4 |
| Special Responsibility Allowances 2023-24 | 5 |
| Mileage and Expenses 2023-24 | 5 |
| Allowances to Parish Councils | 5 |
| The Independent Remuneration Panel | 5 |
| Appendix 1 – Current and Recommended Allowances | 8 |
| Appendix 2 – Summary of Research | 9 |

Recommendations

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends to Bromsgrove District Council the following:

- 1. A Basic Allowance for 2023-24 of £5,081, representing a 7.37% increase.**
- 2. Special Responsibility Allowances as set out in Appendix 1**
- 3. That travel allowances for 2023-24 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance**
- 4. That subsistence allowances for 2023-24 remain unchanged**
- 5. That the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged**
- 6. That for Parish Councils in the District, if travel and subsistence is paid, the Panel recommends that it is paid in accordance with the rates paid by District Council and in accordance with the relevant Regulations**

Introduction and Context

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has been appointed by the Council to carry out reviews of the allowances paid to Councillors, as required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. The Panel has carried out its work in accordance with the legislation and statutory guidance.

The law requires each Council to 'have regard' to the recommendations of the Panel and we noted that Bromsgrove District Council agreed to implement the Panel's Basic Allowance recommendation for 2022-23.

Our recommendations are based on thorough research and benchmarking and we have presented the Council with what we consider to be an appropriate set of allowances to reflect the roles carried out by the Councillors. The purpose of allowances is to enable people from all walks of life to become involved in local politics if they choose.

The Panel does acknowledge that in the current challenging financial climate there are difficult choices for the Council to make. It is for the Council to decide how or whether to adopt the recommendations that we make.

Background Evidence and Research Undertaken

There is a rich and varied choice of market indicators on pay which can be used for comparison purposes. These include:

- National survey data on a national, regional or local level
- Focused surveys on a particular public sector
- Regular or specific surveys
- Use of specific indices to indicate movement in rewards or cost of living

As background for the decisions taken by the Panel this year we have:

- Analysed and considered the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) statistics for 2022 which gives a mean hourly wage rate for Worcestershire of £17.34
- Benchmarked the Basic Allowance against allowances for comparable roles paid by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "nearest neighbour" Councils for each authority
- Taken account of the National Pay Award for the majority of Local Government employees
- Considered the Consumer Price Index information as at September 2022

We give more details about these areas of research at the end of the report.

In 2015, Worcester City Councillors recorded time spent on Council business for a number of weeks. This enabled the Panel to confirm the number of hours per week for front-line councillors, which is used to calculate the recommended Basic Allowance. This exercise was carried out again in 2022 and no significant difference was recorded.

The figure being recommended by the Panel of £5,081 for the Basic Allowance appears reasonable and appropriate when compared to other Local Authorities. The mean average Basic Allowance for the “nearest neighbour” authorities is £5,683. We feel it is important not to allow this gap to widen.

Arising from our research, in **Table 1** we have included information showing the Members’ allowances budget for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid for 2021-22 as a cost per head of population for each Council. To give context, we have included details of the proportion of net revenue budget spent by each Council on Basic and Special Responsibility allowances.

Table 1 - Total spend on Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) as a cost per head of population 2021-22 figures

| Authority, population¹ and number of Councillors | Total spend Basic Allowances | Total spend on SRA | SRA as a percentage of total Basic Allowance | Cost of total basic and SRA per head of population | Total of basic and SRA as a percentage of Net General Revenue Fund expenditure |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | £ | £ | % | £ | % |
| Bromsgrove DC (31) 100,569 | 145,754 | 72,538 | 49.77% | £2.17 | Not available |
| Malvern Hills DC (38) 79,445 | 172,810 | 69,350 | 40% | £3.05 | 2.9% |
| Redditch Borough (29) 85,568 | 127,875 | 94,770 | 74.11% | £2.60 | Not available |
| Worcester City (35) 100,265 | 156,304.52 | 94,696.21 | 60.58% | £2.50 | 1.43% |
| Wychavon (45) 131,084 | 207,425 | 93,121 | 44.89% | £2.29 | 2.77% |

In **Table 2** we show the average payment per member of each authority of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, which illustrates the balance between the level of Special Responsibility Allowances paid and the Basic Allowance.

¹ONS population estimates mid 2020. Totals for Basic and Special Responsibility allowances paid are as published by each authority for the 2021-22 financial year.

Table 2 - Average allowance per Member of each authority (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, 2021–22 figures)

| Authority (number of Councillors) | Amount £ |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Bromsgrove District (31) | £7,182.10 |
| Malvern Hills District (38) | £6,372.63 |
| Redditch Borough (29) | £7,677.41 |
| Worcester City (35) | £7,171.45 |
| Wychavon District (45) | £6,679.00 |

Basic Allowance 2023-24

Calculation of Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance is based on:

- The roles and responsibilities of Members
- Their time commitments – including the total average number of hours worked per week on Council business
- A public service discount of 40% to reflect that Councillors volunteer their time
- The Basic Allowance is paid to all Members of the Council

Whilst each Council may set out role descriptions for Councillors, the Panel accepts that each Councillor will carry out that role differently, reflecting personal circumstances and local requirements. However, we consider the Basic Allowance to include Councillors’ roles in Overview and Scrutiny, as any non-Executive member of the Council is able to contribute to this aspect of the Council’s work. It is for this reason that we do not recommend any Special Responsibility Allowance for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We also consider that ICT could be included in the Basic Allowance as it is generally more readily available to individuals than in previous years. However, we are comfortable that specific local decisions may be made about how ICT support is provided.

We reviewed the levels of wage rates for Worcestershire as set out in the ASHE data (details in Appendix 2) and the benchmark information available to us from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) “nearest neighbours” authorities as part of our research into the level of basic allowance recommended. We are also aware that local government employees have accepted a varying pay award increase of between 4% and 10.5% (averaging approximately 7%) for the financial year 2022-23.

The recommended basic allowance for 2023-24 takes strong account of the ASHE data and is set at an appropriate level in the context of the local government pay award. The Panel are conscious of the current financial challenges but are also mindful to avoid increasing any gap in allowances between Bromsgrove District Council and its “nearest neighbours”

The research information used in the consideration of the Basic Allowance is set out at appendix 2.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) 2023-24

The basis for the calculation of SRAs is a multiplier of the Basic Allowance as advocated in the published Guidance.

Bromsgrove Members had asked the Panel to consider a change to the multiplier for the Planning Committee Chairman for Bromsgrove District Council. The Panel considered data regarding planning meetings provided by all the member councils but could not establish any special circumstances to merit a change of recommendation for Bromsgrove District Council.

Mileage and Expenses 2023-24

The Panel notes that the Council has used the HMRC flat rate for payment of mileage for all types of vehicles for Councillors and recommends that this continues.

The Panel is satisfied that the current levels of subsistence allowances are set at an appropriate level and recommends that these continue.

The Panel notes that the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances provides that Dependant Carer Allowances are payable to cover reasonable and legitimate costs incurred in attending approved duties and recommends that this provision continues.

Allowances to Parish Councils 2023-24

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire District Councils acts as the Remuneration Panel for the Parish Councils in each District.

This year the Panel has not been asked to make recommendations on any matters by any Parish in Bromsgrove District.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

The Members' Allowances Regulations require Local Authorities to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to make recommendations to the authority about allowances to be paid to Elected Members and Local Authorities must have regard to this advice. This Council's Independent Remuneration Panel is set up on a joint basis with four of the other five District Councils in Worcestershire. Separate Annual Reports have been prepared for each Council.

The members of the Panel are:

Reuben Bergman – Reuben Bergman – Reuben is a Fellow of the CIPD with significant senior HR leadership experience across a range of public sector organisations in both England and Wales. He currently runs a HR Consultancy Business in Worcestershire providing advice and support on managing change, employment law, HR policy development, mediation, management coaching and employee relations. Reuben has led successful equal pay reviews in three separate local authorities and is known for his successful work in managing change and developing effective employee relations. He is a qualified coach, mediator and a Shared Service architect. He has won national awards for his work on employee engagement and the development of an innovative Café style leadership development programme.

Matthew Davies – Matthew qualified as a Social Worker in 2008 and subsequently worked with children and young people in Worcestershire, Jersey and Manchester. Latterly he is employed as a Registered Manager of an independent fostering agency, supporting and supervising approved foster carers to care for children and young people in care.

Xenia Goudefroy – Xenia is a Management Accountant with experience in the financial controlling and forecasting for a range of companies in the private sector. She holds an Advanced Diploma in Management Accounting and has completed a Master's degree in Business Administration at University Vila Velha and in International Management at the Steinbeis University Berlin. As a focus topic of her thesis she has developed the order-to-cash process for new business models. Since she moved to the UK in 2017 in her free time she has been volunteering to help people in need and is also working as a volunteer at the Worcester fish-pass to help preserve the natural habitat of migrating species. She is fluent in three languages and enjoys learning new skills.

Tim Hunt – Tim is a qualified journalist with more than 25 years' experience in media and communications. He spent seven years covering community and local authority news in Worcestershire and Warwickshire, including four as editor of two local newspapers, before going on to work in corporate communications and events. Tim now runs his own PR agency and is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Susan Moxon - Susan has worked in the Education sector for over 20 years, working in schools in Warwickshire and Birmingham and then with the Department for Education, where she worked in the 6th form funding team, analysing data from incoming enquiries, mainly from schools and colleges regarding the calculation of their funding statements. She has also acted as an independent observer at Teacher Disciplinary Hearings ensuring that the panel members followed procedures and were unbiased in their decision making. Previously she was an Exams Support Officer providing advice to schools and colleges in Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester about entering students for external exams and assessments, her particular area of expertise.

She is currently Clerk to the Governing Bodies at two First Schools in Worcestershire and to two local charities. She organises meetings, manages the accounts and is the main point of contact with applicants, local providers and the Charity Commission.

Caroline Murphy – Caroline has over 20 years' experience of working in public and voluntary sector organisations, including three West Midlands Local Authorities and the Civil Service. She was a senior Education Manager at Wolverhampton City Council until 2011 developing and delivering a large part of the 14-19 Pathfinder, during which time her department was recognised as achieving Beacon Council Status. She has a wealth of experience at building partnerships. Caroline now works as freelance Education, Skills and Development Adviser supporting individuals and organisations with strategic management, quality assurance and improvement, safeguarding, regulation compliance, research and evaluation, data protection and developing policies and procedures. She has worked in a consultancy capacity for a number of organisations, specialising in those who support vulnerable young people. She also spent 14 years as the Vice Chair of Governors of a primary school in Birmingham.

The Panel has been advised and assisted by:

- Claire Chaplin and Margaret Johnson from Worcester City Council
- Darren Whitney from Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils
- Mel Harris from Wychavon District Council
- Lisa Perks from Malvern Hills District Council

The Panel wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to these officers who have provided advice and guidance in a professional and dedicated manner.

The Panel also wishes to place on record its thanks to Martin Litt for his time and work for the Panel and wish him well.

Caroline Murphy and Matthew Davies, Co-Chairs of Independent Remuneration Panel

Appendix 1

Independent Remuneration Panel for District Councils in Worcestershire Recommendations for 2023-24

Bromsgrove District Council

| Role | Rec'd Multiplier 2022-23 (IRP) | Current Multiplier (Council Agreed) | Rec'd Allowance 2022-23 (IRP) £ | Current Allowance 2022-23 (Council Agreed) £ | Rec'd Multiplier 2023-24 (IRP) | Rec'd Allowance 2023-24 (IRP) £ |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Basic Allowance for all Councillors | 1 | 1 | 4,732 | 4,732 | 1 | 5,081 |
| Special Responsibility Allowance: | | | | | | |
| Leader | 3 | 3 | 14,196 | 14,196 | 3 | 15,243 |
| Deputy Leader | 1.75 | 2 | 8,281 | 9,464 | 1.75 | 8,891.75 |
| Executive Members (Cabinet Portfolio Holders) | 1.5 | 1.3 | 7,098 | 6,151 | 1.5 | 7,621.50 |
| Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Board | 1.5 | 1.3 | 7,098 | 6,151 | 1.5 | 7,621.50 |
| Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups | 0.25 | 0.25 | 1,183 | 1,183 (paid pro rata for the length of the task group) | 0.25 | 1,270.25 |
| Chairman of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee | 0.25 | 0.3 | 1,183 | 1,419 | 0.25 | 1,270.25 |
| Chairman of Planning Committee | 1 | 1.3 | 4,732 | 6,151 | 1 | 5,081 |
| Chairman of Licensing Committee | 0.3 | 0.3 | 1,419.60 | 1,419 | 0.3 | 1,524.30 |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|------|------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Political Group Leaders | 0.25 | 0.25 | 1,183 | 1,183 Leader of the largest opposition political party elected at the ballot box and Leader(s) of other political groups (not applicable to the Leader of the Council) min of 4 members. | 0.25 | 1,270.25 |
| Chairman of Appointments Committee (BDC only) | 0.03 | 0.03 | 141.96 per meeting | 141 per meeting | 0.03 | 152.43 per meeting |
| Chairman of Electoral Matters Committee (BDC only) | 0.03 | 0.03 | 141.96 per meeting | 141 per meeting | 0.03 | 152.43 per meeting |
| Chairman of Appeals Panel (BDC only) | 0.03 | 0.03 | 141.96 per meeting | 141 per meeting | 0.03 | 152.43 per meeting |

Appendix 2

Summary of Research

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "Nearest Neighbour" authorities tool.

No two Councils or sets of Councillors are the same. Developed to aid local authorities in comparative and benchmarking exercises, the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model adopts a scientific approach to measuring the similarity between authorities. Using the data, Bromsgrove District Council's "nearest neighbours" are:

- Stroud
- Lichfield
- Maldon
- South Staffordshire
- Harborough
- Tewkesbury

Information on the level of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances was obtained to benchmark the levels of allowances recommended to the Council. The average basic award across all the "nearest neighbour" authorities was £5,683 as at December 2022.

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) Data on Pay

[Office for National Statistics - Nomis statistics - local authority profile](#)

[Office for National Statistics - Annual Survey of Hours - Nomis](#)

Published by the Office for National Statistics, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) shows detailed information at District level about rates of pay. For benchmarking purposes, the Panel uses the levels for hourly rates of pay excluding overtime (currently £17.34). This is multiplied by 11 to give a weekly rate, which is then multiplied by 44.4 weeks to allow for holidays. This was the number of hours spent on Council business by frontline Councillors which had been reported in previous surveys and substantiated by surveys with Worcester City Councillors in 2015 and 2022. The rate is then discounted by 40% to reflect the element of volunteering that each Councillor undertakes in the role. As a benchmark indicator this would produce a figure of £5,081 per annum.

CPI (Consumer Price Inflation)

In arriving at its recommendations the Panel has taken into account the latest reported CPI figure available to it, published by the Office for National Statistics. This was 10.1% in September 2022.

Local Government Pay Award

The Panel was mindful of the current local government pay award as set out earlier in this report.